

Lofgren Opposes \$87 Billion Supplemental Budget Request

President Must Deliver Exit Plan for Iraq and Support the Basic Needs of U.S. Troops

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Washington, DC – Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose) today issued the following statement in opposition to the \$87 billion supplemental budget request for Iraq: o:p>

“Mr. Speaker, one year ago, Congress considered whether to authorize the President to use the armed forces of the United States to attack Iraq. The President asked us to pass a resolution that gave him unprecedented war powers at a time when he had yet to make the case for war. I voted against the resolution.

“Today the President asks us to pass an enormous spending bill to fund the ongoing war in Iraq and the continuing reconstruction of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, everyday, American lives are lost while the President fails to garner broad international support and create a coherent exit strategy for a war that is less about self-defense and more about the President’s obsession with Iraq. All along, our economy continues to remain on the ropes.

“Therefore, like my previous vote on authorizing the use of our armed forces in Iraq, I cannot support this supplemental bill to give the President a huge blank check to continue the occupation of Iraq and risk the lives of our troops. As Members of Congress, this is our opportunity to tell the President what our constituents are telling us – we won’t spend another penny in Iraq until our President gives the American people a plan on how he intends to win the war, minimize costs, and most importantly, bring home our troops as safely and as quickly as possible.

“As we were debating whether or not to grant authority to the President to go to war in Iraq, I asked some serious questions that this Administration continues to have difficulty answering. Was the United States acting in self-defense against an imminent threat in Iraq? Did the United States have to pursue near unilateral action in Iraq without strong international support? And most importantly, what is our exit strategy?

“The President and his Administration repeatedly told us Iraq posed an imminent threat of safety to America. But where are those nuclear weapons?

“Before the war, the Administration also told us there was strong, credible evidence to link Saddam Hussein to September 11th. Yet, the President himself now admits there is no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September 11th.

“We were told Iraq had thousands of weapons of mass destruction that could easily be used against friends, our allies and the United States. But where are they?

“Worse yet, we were never told about an exit strategy and still don’t have one today.

“Instead the President spent his time playing “Top Gun” by landing on an aircraft carrier to declare the major conflict in Iraq over. Yet, more courageous men and women have died in these last few months than before that dubious, made-for-political-campaign-commercial event.

“And now the President comes to us asking for enormous amounts of money to continue what is supposedly no longer a major conflict.

“Even if we agree to send money to Iraq, we shouldn’t send it to contractors that are ripping off the American taxpayer. Why should the American taxpayer pay \$15 million to repair a cement plant when the Iraqi people can do it, and did, for

\$80,000?

"More importantly, we've already appropriated over \$70 billion for the war in Iraq and related efforts, virtually every penny the President asked for to win this war and protect our troops. So why does the Army lack Kevlar protective plates for 40,000 of our troops in Iraq? Why do we continue to hear stories about parents sending their children better protective gear, basic supplies, and food and water at their own cost? Why does the Defense Department refuse to pay travel costs for soldiers returning from battle for a brief, two-week visit with loved ones? The President has given us no assurances that his new funding request will not be mismanaged and, instead be used in strong support of our troops.

"There is no question that we need to allocate whatever funds are necessary to support our troops in the field.

"But there is only one real opportunity for the Congress to have a say in the course of war or foreign affairs and that is when the President comes to us and asks us to appropriate the taxpayer's money for war.

"That time is now and this Congress must insist that the President deliver his exit plan and detail how he plans to get equipment, food and water to our troops.

"If this appropriation is defeated today, the President will be with us tomorrow delivering the exit plan that he should have provided to the American people one year ago.

"As I said during the debate over the war with Iraq, we are at our best when we are first among allies standing tall for the free world. Let us be at our best when we deal with Iraq, but always dedicate ourselves first and foremost to the freedom and prosperity of our great United States."